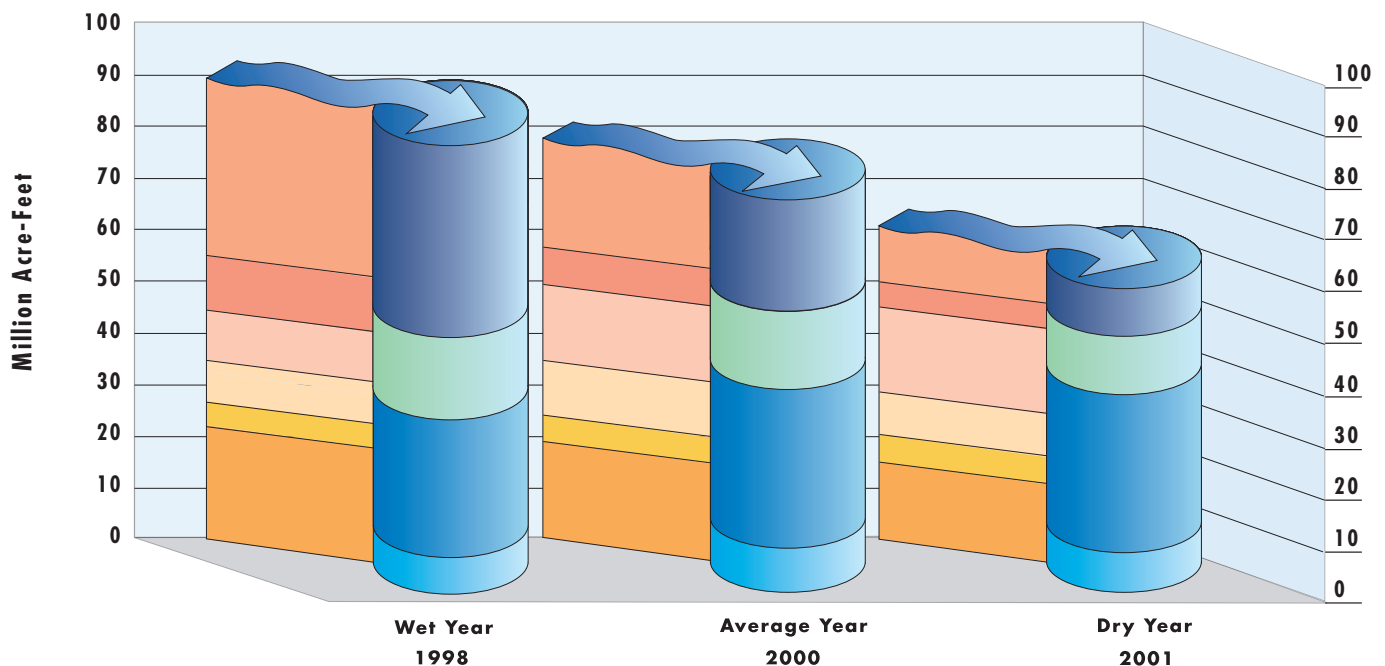


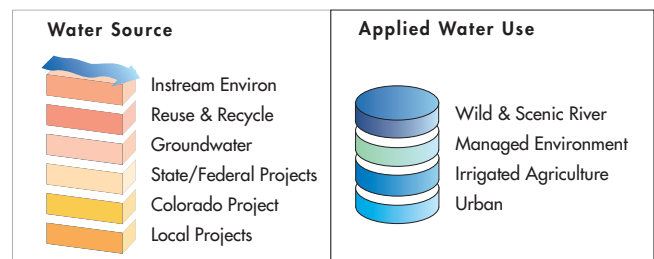


# California

## California Water Balance



California's water balance can vary significantly from year to year. Three recent years show a marked change in the amount and relative proportion of the following: water delivered to urban and agricultural sectors and water dedicated to the environment (applied water use); where the water came from (water source); and how much water was reused among sectors. Each year, applied water is only a portion of California's total precipitation and inflows. The rest—about 120 maf in an average year—either evaporates, is used by native vegetation, provides rainfall for agriculture and managed wetlands, or flows out of state or to salt sinks.



# Water Today

California is a state of great diversity. Nationwide, no other state can match the variety of California's cultures, ecosystems, geography, and hydrology. This diversity brings distinct challenges to the management of California's groundwater and surface water resources. Most of the state's snow and rain fall in the mountains; most of the water is used in the valleys and coastal plains. Precipitation totals vary from year to year and from place to place. Wet years can bring the threat of floods; drought years put pressure on available water supplies.

On a statewide basis, California is fortunate to have enough water in years with average precipitation. Over the past 50 years, Californians have been able to meet water demands primarily through an extensive network of water storage and conveyance facilities, groundwater development, and, more recently, by improving water use efficiency.

A big challenge now and for the future is to make sure water is in the right places at the right times. Challenges will be greatest during dry years (see year 2001 water

balance; precipitation was 72% of average). Water dedicated to the environment is curtailed sharply in these years. Greater reliance on groundwater during dry years results in higher costs for many users. At the same time, water users who have already increased efficiency may find it more challenging to achieve additional water use reductions during droughts. As competition grows among water users, water management during dry years will become more complex and, at times, contentious.



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